/38/

Maize (Zea mays L.): Succeeds well when sown at the beginning of the winter season. The native species sown under these conditions is very beautiful and gives large yellow ears, very well filled out. The Africans eat fresh roasted corn, and, when it is hard, they make couscous of it. The infusion prepared with the fruit is emollient and diuretic. The styles or stigmas of maize are famous as diuretics and cure several ailments of the urinary tract (cystitis, gravel, dysuria, etc.); the young kernels, when cooked, constitute an excellent vegetable and replace peas; the flour gives a beer and an alcoholic extract. The husks of the ears serve to make quite springy mattresses.

243 262 757 [273] [513]

II. -- Useful Gramineae

(not being subject to any cultivation)

824

Bamboo. -- Grows in the wild state in the Ravin des Voleurs /Ravine of Thieves/ near Thiès. The native species is rather small. Stakes, frames, masts of dugouts, huts, and fences, but especially clinting (constructions of bamboo filled in with lime) are made of it. The young shoots are said to be edible, and the sweet sap is supposed to be an agreeable drink. In Casamance a small species of bamboo grows in shady places; pipestems are made of it.

[313] [342] [262] [272] [276]

Begnefala (Andropogon shirensis). -- A tall gramineous plant with a penetrating aromatic odor. It is used in African medicine, and the old colonials used it with success at the time of the great epidemic of yellow fever at Dakar in 1927. For fevers, one pounds the floral heads mixed with lemon or vinegar and energetically rubs the body with this mixture.

[757]

Hada (Imperata cylindrica). -- A gramineous plant with a very hard leaf and whitish ear, which is used for covering the roofs of huts.

[342]

Hat (Andropogon gayanus). -- Tall grass whose stem is used in making fences around huts.

[351]

Haham or cram-cram (Cenchrus biflorus). -- Its seeds fasten themselves to clothing and are very disagreeable. Is gathered and

[262]

/13 cont./

242 244 654 specialists envisage the utilization of the phosphates of Thiès.

3) Protection of the environment. The cultivation of the groundnut with the traditional techniques carries with it grave dangers for the soil. The abusive burning of brush denudes it and facilitates the erosive action of the dry harmattan which blows at the end of the dry season, from the month of March. The cultivation, most often improvident, leads to the rapid deterioration of very unstable soils. In the west the sands are impoverished, the salts are rising to the surface; in the east the lateritic cuirass appears at a shallow depth.

[313 656] Legislation is intervening in defense of the natural environment; the decree of 4 July 1935 has interdicted the cutting of trees without authorization and has regulated the burning of brush and clearing. The most effective remedies, however, have been introduced by experimentation and recommended after a serious inventory of the soils. The example of Boulel has shown that bands of natural vegetation separating the clearings by passages perpendicular to the roads are an effective remedy against the action of the wind. The instability of the soils requires a strict system of rotation. Bambey and Boulel have proved that the sequence of millet, groundnuts, and fallowing is the best for preserving them. Fallowing for two years, recommended in the south, is insufficient in the north, where six years of rest seems to be indispensable. It is undeniable that for several years these crop rotations have been followed more and more, especially in the pilot sectors. Finally, the rearrangement of the map of the groundnut, amply primed, may have beneficial consequences. The circles /cercles, administrative districts/ bordering the Senegal River have practically abandoned this crop (Podor, Matam, etc.); northern Cayor, with a dry climate, impoverished soils, and a large population, has had a very marked decline in groundnuts to the profit of millet. In contrast, the new regions in Siné-Saloum and Tambacounda typically become groundnut-producers.

All of these innovations can actually bear fruit only with the acceptance of the peasant masses, which poses the problem